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SUBJECT: WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST; THE US ROLE; GUANTANAMO; ARGENTINE  
PRESIDENT'S ISOLATIONISM; AMBASSADOR WAYNE 07/31/06

#### 1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Weekend papers cover the war in the Middle East; the UN Human Rights Committee notifying the US that it should close all its secret centers of detention; the confirmation of Ambassador Wayne as US Ambassador to Argentina; and Argentine President Kirchner's isolationism.

#### 2. OPINION PIECES AND KEY STORIES

- "Blair and Bush pressure for a fast deployment of international troops"

Hugo Alconada Mon, Washington-based correspondent for daily-of-record "La Nacion," comments (07/30) "Shoulder to shoulder, just like during the last three years in Iraq, US President George W. Bush and UK PM Tony Blair announced yesterday that they would promote a UN resolution ordering the deployment of an international force in South Lebanon...

"However, Bush and Blair distanced themselves from other world leaders, from France, Germany, Russia, China and the Arab bloc, by refusing to call for an immediate ceasefire and warning that a plan to face long-term disputes in the region should be negotiated.

"... The White House's refusal to call for an immediate cease fire, the failure of the Rome conference, and Washington's strong support for Israel for the last three weeks was interpreted by Israeli authorities as an implicit sign to continue their offensive as long as necessary."

- "Bush, Iraq and a problem that is not only a language-related problem"

Gustavo Sierra, international columnist of leading "Clarín," writes (07/30) "... It is not only a language-related problem. It is basically related to lack of understanding of the Middle East. The Bush administration never understood what an invasion of Iraq implied...

"Three years later, it is wrong again. When everyone expected the Bush administration to announce a troop reduction, US President Bush asserted during a press conference that he would send more US marines to Iraq in view of the humanitarian crisis in the country.

"Bush seems to be suffering from the same myopia in the offensive against Hezbollah in Lebanon. He is delaying an intervention for a cease fire and let Israeli airplanes continue bombing almost indiscriminately instead of focusing on Hezbollah... He let war spread, thereby unleashing more resentment towards the US and Israel than towards Hezbollah's terrorists."

- "I, the Supreme"

Telma Luzani, international columnist of leading "Clarín," writes (07/29) "Yesterday, in a new exhibition of unilateralism, US President George W. Bush proposed to send 'a multinational stabilization force' to solve the crisis between Israel and Lebanon.

"His decision is not only worrisome because of what it means as an escalation in the militarization of the world but because it overlooks Europe and international institutions in planning meetings in search for peace. No one spoke of a cease fire in Washington yesterday."

- "A current tragedy"

Daily-of-record "La Nación" carries an opinion piece by contributor Natalio Botana, who writes (07/30) "... Every falling house in Lebanon fuels the boiling pot of resentment.

"As a matter of fact, the UN is unarmed, Europe continues bogged down in its lack of action, and the US is part of the conflict as a faithful ally of Israel...

"In Latin America, Venezuela, the new permanent member of Mercosur, is a confessed militant in favor of Iran.

"In a few words, this is a world without mediators. Lack of international mediation is a sign of the overwhelming paradox in which we are part because this world is increasingly interconnected on several levels (economic, demographic and cultural) but it has a persistent political deficit."

- "Middle East - a return to the worst past"

Leading "Clarín" (07/29) carries an opinion piece by international analyst Oscar Raul Cardoso (07/29) "The Israeli offensive in Lebanon could unite all Islamic factions and the more moderate Arab governments against it...

"Yesterday, even the international newspapers that are more reluctant to criticize the Israeli offensive gave broad coverage to the Arab countries' increasing malaise vis-à-vis the military offensive and the way this view is influencing governments.

"... As President Jacques Chirac has wisely said, 'the solution' of this crisis 'is not military.' The US and Israeli political myopia is amazing...

"If, as US Secretary of State said, the war in the Middle East is equal to the 'delivery pain of a new Middle East,' we should come to terms that we run the risk of giving birth to a fossilized past."

- "The decisive battle"

Centrist "Perfil" (07/30) carries an opinion piece by political analyst Jorge Castro, who writes "... Israel is facing a strategic crossroads - it may not afford not to win. A strategic tie with Hezbollah would be the same as the defeat of Israel...

"Today's war in the Middle East has a systemic nature - Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon. What happens in Lebanon will transmit its consequences to the rest. Both on a military and political-strategic level, this implies Iran's isolation or a strengthening of its hegemonic claims (nuclear program).

"The Middle East is today the most strategic region in the world based on an equation of its two terms - oil and conflicts."

- "According to the UN, the US should close secret prisons"

Leading "Clarín" reports (07/29) "The UN Human Rights Committee notified the US that it should immediately close all its centers of detention, after having released a highly critical report on Washington, which the latter already rejected.

"While the UN Human Rights Committee does not mention the US naval

base in Guantanamo, it indirectly condemned the illegal status of some 500 detainees, most of whom were brought from Arab countries occupied by the US.

"... On Guantanamo, the Committee report implies that this prison should also be closed by making it clear that the US should also honor humanitarian deals outside of its territory...

"For its part, the US has rejected the implementation of the Human Rights Convention outside of its territory, and expressed its 'disappointment' about the conclusions of the report."

- "US Ambassador's nomination is confirmed"

Hugo Alconada Mon, Washington-based correspondent for daily-of-record "La Nacion," comments (07/29)"Yesterday, after two months of negotiations and unexpected retreats with Cuban lobbyists in the US, Earl Anthony Wayne officially became the new US Ambassador to Argentina, where he is expected to arrive in mid-September.

"According to legislative sources, the US Senate approved his nomination by 'unanimous consensus,' a practice which allows senators to prevent a nomination, like Wayne's, from being subject to voting.

"... The hurdle for Wayne's nomination was lifted yesterday when Senator Ensign got the conclusions of a report on the 'Havana case' from the Office for Foreign Assets Control, at the US Department of the Treasury.

"Now that his nomination has been confirmed, 'Tony' Wayne's agenda for Buenos Aires becomes again the focus of consideration. He will promote commercial ties, which is his field of expertise, and he will focus his political concern on the Argentine Government's ties with Hugo Chavez.

"During a hearing at the US Senate, Wayne said that 'it is important that Argentina continues creating a more welcoming investment climate.' 'Only in this way will the country be able to consolidate the benefits of its economic growth and deal with the real problem of poverty.' Direct and straight, Wayne praised the reforms promoted by the Menem administration in the '90s, and he labeled the country's view of the US and the IMF a 'distortion.'

"Apart from the Cubans, Washington's powerful supported Wayne. An advisor to the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee told 'La Nacion' that Wayne 'will serve as a bridge among peoples at a very important moment of the US-Argentine bilateral relationship.' We expect that his priority will be creating the conditions for our governments to 'return' (just like Gardel used to sing) to the relationship of the past.'"

- "In new US ambassador's agenda, investment will be top priority"

Ana Baron, Washington-based correspondent for leading "Clarín," writes (07/30) "... After the Cuban lobbyists hindered the confirmation of Earl Anthony Wayne's nomination as US Ambassador to Buenos Aires, the US Senate finally approved his nomination on Friday. In this way, brand-new Ambassador Wayne will arrive in Argentina in September...

"Having been the Assistant Secretary for Economic Affairs at the US Department of State, Wayne has closely followed the Argentine economy since its big crisis. During the hearing at the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee in which his nomination was analyzed, Wayne promised that his three priorities will be the investment climate, the expansion of bilateral trade, and the FTAA.

"... Wayne's arrival in Argentina will coincide with a conflictive political moment. During September, the UN General Assembly will choose the Latin American country that will replace Argentina at the UN Security Council. The US has ferociously lobbied in favor of Guatemala, but Argentina and all Mercosur countries have committed themselves to voting for Venezuela, which has spread concern among Republicans and Democrats.

"A USG source told 'Clarín' that those senators who represent states

where there are businessmen who are concerned about IPR and judicial security in Argentina voted in favor of Wayne's candidacy."

- "Argentina's international isolation"

Daily-of-record "La Nacion" carries an opinion piece by prestigious political columnist Joaquin Morales Sola, who writes (07/30) "... President Kirchner has an isolationist trend that could affect the country for a long time. As a matter of fact, now is the moment of greatest international tension for Argentina since 1983.

"... Kirchner's own agenda for this year is almost empty - he is seldom invited anywhere and just a few heads of State visit him. Kirchner only attends summits.

"... Kirchner could have a problem - a leader is not only judged for what he does but also for what he does not do."

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